

UNITED NATIONS RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE

PART ONE

OVERVIEW OF TRENDS IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMENS ADVANCEMENT

Although the Fourth Women's World Conference in 1995 set the pace by coming up with a Global Platform for Action which was later to be translated into the National Plan of Action, not many institutions/agencies understood the Beijing Platform for Action.

Previously the issues of equality between men and women were spearheaded by women's machineries only making the task double difficult as other institutions did not clearly see their involvement. It has since been realised that the issue of equality between men and women should be seen as a national concern as inequality between men and women does not only end in men being economically powerful but reduces the national pace of development since more than half of the population would have been ignored and remain inactive.

The Fourth World Womens Conference came up with 12 critical areas of concern from which most countries had to draw up a plan on how they were to address these. Given the resource situation in most of these developing countries, it was not possible to address these concerns at one time. Zimbabwe identified what it considered areas of major concerns and prioritised these for actioning. These were:

- (1) Women and the Economy
- (2) Education and Training for Women
- (3) Women in Politics and Decision Making
- (4) Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

However although Zimbabwe came up with her own priority list, this is not to suggest that the other eight areas were neglected. A lot of programmes in the other critical areas have been going on

either being spearheaded by other Government Ministries or Non-Government Organisations.

PART TWO

FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES

Ideally most of the activities to be carried out to address these critical areas of concern could only be effected within a National Gender Policy. As such the National Machinery embarked on the Formulation of a National Gender Policy and a Plan of Action. Consultations on the policy are under way and it is envisaged that the first policy draft will be ready in January of 2000. The Plan of Action has also been completed and has been a combined effort of Government NGOs and other stakeholders.

In order to get a cross section of Womens/Gender concerns addressed, gender focal points have been identified in all Government Ministries, Private Sector and N.G.Os

These focal points have made contributions into the Plan of Action in terms of what they see to be their organisational roles in promoting the 12 critical areas of concern. It is therefore envisaged that the National Gender Policy when in place will reinforce some of the anticipated activities planned under the various sectors. The G.F.P have strengthened the National Machinery significantly. There is still however a need to gender sensitive the top echolons of institutions, agencies or parastatals on gender issues.

The situation of the girl child has improved since 1995. In terms of enrolment in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary education, there has been a significant rise in the number of girls enrolling however enrolment of the boy child is still higher at tertiary level. The Ministry of Education has come up with special programmes for the Girl Child such as 'A Fund' for the Girl Child fees. The curriculum is being revised to be gender sensitive and gender related programmes are being included in the school syllabus. At tertiary level there is Affirmative Action taken in favour of girls. There has not been however enough Affirmative Action in the Public Sector. The number of women in Decision – Making is still the same as 1995.

PART 3

In the area of Politics, there has been a project on Civic Education mainly to ensure that women are informed of their rights, are trained to be confident and are given all the information and skills that are required in holding a Public Office.

Although the Project on Civic Education was targeted at aspiring Rural Councillors there was no significant rise in the number of Rural Councillors voted into office but the level of awareness was high judging from the women that aspired to enter Public Offices. There was an exception of one Province which scored 25% of female councillors. This is a great achievement not only for that province but for Zimbabwe as a whole.

The issue of the National Budget remains problematic. SADC, the University of Zimbabwe and the Gender office have attempted to sensitise Ministry of Finance Officials on the need of allocating more resources to the National Machinery Budget but this has not yet yielded good results. With continuous gender sensitisation to Decision and Policy Makers, it is hoped by the year 2005 the concept of allocating enough resources for gender activities will be better understood.

Zimbabwe through UNIFEM has come up with a Gender Forum which has been mostly a forum for exchange of information and ideas. This forum has been active in disseminating information on Conferences although not much has been addressed on the World Summit for Social Development or the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights.

ZIMBABWE

Critical Areas of Concern	Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (Indicate any targets and strategies set and related achievements)	Examples of obstacles encountered/lessons learned.	Commitment of further action/new initiatives	Other
X11. The Girl Child	1) Gender Sensitive Curriculum. 2) F.L.E in Schools 3) Human Rights Education in Schools.	1) Cultural Barriers still a problem. 2) Absence of resources. 3) Slow pace in change and attitudes	1) Affirmative Action 2) Special Fund for Girls	
Critical Areas of Concern	Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (Indicate any targets and strategies set and related achievements).	Example of obstacles encountered/lessons learned	Commitment to further action/new initiatives	Other
V111 Institutional	1) Gender Focal Points	1) Input of plans to	1) Lobbying for better	

	mechanisms for the advancement of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2) In place Gender awareness and sensitivity programme. 3) National Gender Policy Formulation in Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2) National Machinery slow 2) Shortage of resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Capacity Building for National Machinery Staff 	
1X	Human rights of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Victim friendly courts established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Attitudes and cultural barriers to accepting violation of human rights 1) Continue to be male dominated. 2) Attitudes of the journalists is negative to women's issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Introduction of Human RIGHTS Education in Schools 1) An increase of women sub-editors 	
X	Women and the Media				
XI	Woman and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Commitment to Community Based Programmes 2) Women's Education on Environmental Impact assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continuous exclusion of women in environmental policy making issues 		

ZIMBABWE

ANNEXURE 1

Critical Areas of Concern	Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (Indicate any targets and strategies set and related achievements)	Examples of obstacles encountered/lessons learned	Commitment to further action/new initiatives	Other
1. Women and poverty	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Poverty alleviation programmes 2) Entrepreneurship projects 3) Savings and credit unions (Village Banks) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Problems in accessing credit 2) Land redistribution issue 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Effort to establish Bank for Women. 	<p>With increasing poverty, Women are not able to raise any capital.</p>
1.1. Education and training of women	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Gender sensitive School Curriculum 2) T.F.E. intensified 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Attitudes towards Women 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To come up with role to encourage more women to go for training 	
1.1.1 Women and Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Expansion of Family Planning Services 2) HIV/AIDS Education 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cultural attitudes and behaviours 2) Limited resources 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Community Based support services 2) Intensification of 	

	Programmes in Schools 3) Improved information dissemination in Health		Health Education	
Critical Areas of Concern	Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Bejinging Platform for Action (Indicate any targets and strategies set and related achievements)	Examples of obstacles encountered/addressed learned	Commitment of further action/new initiatives	Other
IV Violence against women	1) Shelter projects for women 2) Educational programmes on media	1) Resentment of such programmes from male chauvinists 2) Cultural reservation on the part of women therefore will not report.		
V Women and armed conflict	1) Rehabilitation Programmes for women	1) Exclusion of Women in Decision Making positions reduces effectiveness on peace negotiations		
VI Women and the economy	1) Entrepreneurship Programmes	10 Discrimination by Financial institutions	1) Establishment of the Bank	

	2) Recognition of informal sector		2) Intensity Savings and Credit Unions 3) Lobby for removal of collaterals as security for borrowing.	
VII Women in power and decision – making	1) Women in Politics and Decision Making 2) Linkage Programmes 3) Affirmative Action Programmes	1) Attitudes and cultural Practices	1) Lobbying for affirmative Action 2) Production of a Womens Directory for easy reference. 3) Mapping of Power Points.	



ZIMBABWE GOVERNMENT
PROGRESS REPORT
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE PLATFORM
FOR ACTION

NOVEMBER 1999

DAW FILE COPY
DO NOT REMOVE

PROPERTY OF
DAW/DPCSD
DATA BANK/RESOURCE CENTER

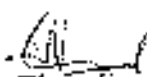
FOREWORD

Zimbabwe joins other countries the world over in recommitting itself to the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration . The full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life is a pre-requisite for social transformation and development.

After the Beijing Women's Conference held in 1995, Zimbabwe drew up its own National Plan of Action for the implementation of the Platform For Action. This report only addresses four of the twelve critical areas of concern. The four critical areas of concern addressed were identified as the national priority areas of concern without excluding other areas. The report gives an overview of what was planned, the actual achievements as well as the challenges encountered in implementing the identified areas of concern.

Special thanks go to staff and consultants of the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives which houses the National Machinery for co-ordinating women's issues in Zimbabwe, the Gender Forum, focal persons in various government ministries and departments and other sectors, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders who participated in the generation of this report. -----

Finally, special thanks to UNIFEM who provided the funding for the production of this report and Eunice Njovana who produced the report.



Thenjiwe V. Lesabe

Minister of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW	3
II. REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS WITHIN WHICH THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED	5
III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION	6
1. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN	7
2. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING	14
3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN	23
4. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY	33
IV. CONCLUSION	41

ZIMBABWE PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

I. OVERVIEW

The Government of Zimbabwe remains committed to the full implementation of the Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration. After the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in 1995, Zimbabwe identified priorities derived from the 12 critical areas of concern. The following areas of critical concern were identified:

- ◊ **Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.**
- ◊ **Women in power and decision-making**
- ◊ **Education and training of women**
- ◊ **Women and the Economy**

The report presentation will follow the provided ECA guidelines with minor variations to give the regional context of the report. This report, while acknowledging the importance of the other 8 critical areas of concern, will limit itself to the four prioritised areas of concern for Zimbabwe.

The Government of Zimbabwe recognises that the participation and contribution of all actors of civil society; particularly women's groups, networks and other non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations and the private sector, with full respect for their autonomy,

in co-operation with the Government, is important to the implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action. That notwithstanding, this report will only cover the efforts of the government and acknowledge the co-operation of those non-state players who were partners in the conception and implementation of policies and programmes that will be discussed. Zimbabwe still needs to put in place effective mechanisms to ensure effective partnerships between the government and non-state stakeholders and to ensure the implementation of the platform for action. This report therefore will only give a glimpse of the multiple efforts of the government and people of Zimbabwe and other agencies to ensure the realisation of the equality of both women and men in all spheres of life.

The following have been Zimbabwe's achievements in the years under review:

- * In 1996, the process towards the establishment of the first women's bank, Oma Capital Account Bank was set in motion.
- * In 1997, set up a Gender Issues Department housed in the office of the President and Cabinet.
- * In June 1997, launched a nation-wide programme called Women in Politics and Decision-making. The main objective of the project was to enhance the position of women in Zimbabwe through their increased participation in politics and decision-making at all levels of society.
- * The government initiated the formulation of a National Gender Policy as a tool for mainstreaming gender equality
- * Instituted affirmative action programmes in the education system starting from early childhood education through to tertiary education.
- * There is currently a review of all educational material in primary education in order to screen for gender bias in learning and

educational materials and other aids. Primary and secondary schools have embarked on gender sensitisation programmes for learners, teachers and parents and also incorporated human rights education in the school curriculum.

II. REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS WITHIN WHICH THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED

Zimbabwe, like most countries of the world, adopted the Global Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, and thus committed itself to the 12 critical areas of concern as specified in the Platform for Action. In September 1997, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, including Zimbabwe, rekindled the commitment made at the Beijing Conference through a declaration of Heads of State and Government. In this declaration, SADC Heads of State and Government committed themselves to achieve at least a 30% target for women in decision making positions by the year 2005, increase women's participation in the economy, engender constitutions, amend discriminatory laws and fight against violence against women and children

Two of these declarations fall within Zimbabwe's prioritised areas of concern, namely the need to increase the participation of women in politics and decision-making, and strengthening their stake in the economy.

Since 1998, Zimbabwe has, through a massive national consultative process, been working towards coming up with a new national

constitution. This process has opened up opportunities for the mainstreaming of gender in the highest law of the land.

The economic environment has not been conducive to an aggressive implementation of the Platform for Action. Zimbabwe has continued to experience economic hardships and has had to tighten government spending because of an increasing budget deficit which, according to 1997 figures, stood at approximately 12 % of Gross Domestic Product. In 1997, the Zimbabwe Dollar devalued against major currencies. Interest rates are running high with the mid-1999 inflation levels standing at about 60%.

The other downside of the national context is that due to a poor human and financial resource provision to the National Machinery as well as an overcrowding of responsibilities on the co-ordinating Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives, government and non-state players have had to implement the provisions of the Platform for Action outside the framework of a national plan of action. Without a plan of action, there have been no clearly laid out and commonly stated benchmarks against which to measure the progress of implementation. Zimbabwe has just finalised its national plan of action which, it is hoped, will be very helpful in measuring implementation progress.

The poor resource provision to the National Machinery already referred to has meant that there is no capacity to co-ordinate and monitor implementation of the Platform for Action by civic groups, the private sector, parastatal bodies and other stakeholders. The effect of this state of affairs has been that while there is visible commitment to the provisions of the Platform for Action, there has been limited co-ordinated

work resulting in fragmented efforts to dislodge gender inequalities in Zimbabwe. In accounting for these efforts, the National Machinery has limited capacity or mechanisms to capture and showcase the work done to dismantle gender inequality or to identify gaps in implementation. However civic groups, particularly women's groups, have done a great deal of work in Zimbabwe.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION.

I. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

In the Zimbabwe Report on the United Nations Decade for Women, 1985-1995, it was reported that in 1981, the then Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs was established to facilitate the integration of women in all development programmes to mobilise, organise, co-ordinate and monitor public, private and non-governmental programmes geared towards closing the disparity or gaps between men and women. The Department of Women's Affairs in this ministry not only had a policy enunciation, co-ordinating and monitoring role, it was also in a position to implement projects and carry out activities aimed at improving the status of women. Government allocated limited resources to that Ministry. Between the years 1985 to 1994, the National Machinery received approximately 1.4% of the National Budget. In 1996 Zimbabwe saw a downgrading of the National Machinery to the status of a Unit in the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives (MNAECC).

The Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives' mission is to facilitate and promote " the economic empowerment of

communities through advocacy and entrepreneurial development, focusing on women, the youth and unemployed." (Ministry of National Affairs Employment Creation and Co-operatives Strategic Plan of Action, 1999-2002)

The core function of the Ministry is to create employment. In fact, the articulated vision of the ministry is to become a leading employment creator in Zimbabwe. Gender equality is projected by this Ministry as a tool for employment creation and development. In discussing current efforts to come up with a National Gender Policy, the MNAECC Strategic Plan of Action notes, '...It is envisaged that these instruments will provide a platform to usher the Ministry to a dominant position in the employment creation arena. To that extent the critical actions to expedite the legal realisation of the operation of these instruments is central to the achievement of the Ministry's core business.'

In its strategic objectives which number eleven in all, the promotion of gender issues among communities ranks eighth.

The Women in Development Unit in the Ministry is headed by a Deputy Secretary of Women and Youth. The staff establishment of the Unit has 6 officers with only two of them currently in post. One of these two officers is working on a special assignment and is therefore unavailable for the day-to-day activities of the National Machinery. The unit has a very small annual budgetary allocation of Z\$150 000 (US\$4 000) for women's projects for the whole country, apart from paying salaries for the unit's staff.

At the time of writing this Report, the Government of Zimbabwe announced its year 2000 Financial Budget. Noteworthy in this Budget is

that the indicated broad sectional budget lines of the Ministry do not allocate funds specifically to deal with gender-related activities.

The Government of Zimbabwe is committed to promoting gender equality, but the National Machinery has limited human and financial resources to spearhead this noble goal. Furthermore, there is no clearly articulated staff development policy that would equip the limited personnel with the skills to conceptualise and implement its mandate effectively and fully.

The sum effect of the situation discussed above is that the National Machinery has been slow in ensuring the implementation and monitoring of the Global Platform for Action. This is against a background of unrealistic expectations by both the government and non-state players on what the National Machinery should be doing.

Zimbabwe recognises that the participation and contribution of all sectors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, and the private sector, with full respect to their autonomy, in co-operation with the government, is important to the implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action.

While fully appreciative of this fact, it has not been possible, to date, to collect information from all stakeholders on all efforts being made nationally to implement the Global Platform for Action. By the same token, it is noted that this handicap can also be fertile ground to breed the perpetuation of inequalities where monitoring mechanisms are not in place. While the National Machinery enjoys a measure of unstructured

collaboration with non-governmental organisations, and receives some technical and financial support from multilateral, bilateral and private sources, there is still a worrying absence of collaboration with the private sector.

The National Gender Policy

In the Zimbabwe Report on the United Nations Decade for Women (1985-1995), it was reported that the post-Beijing era would be committed to developing a National Gender Policy for Zimbabwe.

The main task of the National Machinery is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas. In responding to this main task, the government of Zimbabwe, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has started a process of developing a National Gender Policy. The process towards developing this policy has been designed to be as participatory as is possible within the limitations of the resources allocated to the work on developing the policy. It is expected that Zimbabwe will have a National Gender Policy in place by December 1999.

It is important to mention that, because of the delayed crafting of a National Gender Policy, some sectional policies had been developed without a comprehensive guiding national policy framework. It is planned that once a National Gender Policy is in place, already existing sector policies will be reviewed and streamlined accordingly.

Gender Focal Points

In 1994 the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives set up gender focal points in the various government ministries and departments. The idea behind the creation of this position was to provide the National Machinery with focal persons in the various sectors who would study the gender situation on the ground report to the National machinery and co-ordinate gender-related activities. The focal persons would monitor gender mainstreaming in ministries and provide information on the same to the ministries.

While the rationale for creating focal points is understood, these have not been very effective, because of the absence of a National Gender Policy to guide their work. Furthermore, the work on gender issues was assigned to the officers in addition to their many other duties. This has resulted in the over-commitment of these officers, some of whom clearly owe their first allegiance to their employing ministries and therefore give more attention to that work. Another challenge has been a lack of clarity on the mechanism for reporting to the National Machinery and how this reporting would impact on the work of the Ministry.

There is a case for creating gender focal points and it is hoped that the enunciation of the National Gender Policy will assist in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of gender focal persons. It is also hoped that the commonly owned, shared and understood Gender Policy will help Heads of Ministries and Departments to better appreciate the role and function of gender focal persons and help them in executing their functions.

The Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives still faces the challenge of creating gender focal points within the non-

governmental community, the private sector, and parastatal bodies clearly articulating their mandate and the supervisory and reporting mechanism for these gender focal points. For these gender focal persons to be effective, they would also need the requisite training for the tasks given to them.

The Gender Issues Department

Apart from the National Machinery housed in the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives, in 1997 the Government of Zimbabwe set up a Gender Issues Department headed by a Minister. The Gender Issues Department is located in the office of the President and Cabinet, the administrative head being a Director who answers to the Minister. The Department has no budget of its own and is funded from the budget of the Office of the President.

The functions of the Gender Issues Department are to:

- monitor the implementation of the gender policy
- co-ordinate all gender-related activities throughout government ministries and departments, the private sector, local, regional and international organisations and non-governmental organisations
- provide a national focal point for all gender-related issues
- monitor the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
- undertake research studies on gender-related issues

Linkage with National Machinery

The Gender Issues Department is an arm of the Women in Development Unit in the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-

operatives in that, while the National Machinery's role is to enunciate, implement and co-ordinate gender policies and programmes, the Gender Issues Department monitors policy implementation.

The creation of the Gender Issues Department has added weight to the quest for gender equality in Zimbabwe. It is early days yet to assess the activities of the Gender Issues Department - it is only two years old, a year of which saw the Department with only the Minister and one member of staff out of the eight members of staff required to implement the Department's activities.

The Gender Issues Department is currently working on a plan of action which is nearing finalisation.

The creation of this Department further underscores the Government of Zimbabwe's commitment to implementing the Global Plan of Action. What remains to be done though is to systematically marry the functions of the National Machinery with those of the Gender Issues Department in such a way that they do not send conflicting messages to the women and men of Zimbabwe. The bottom line is that there is a need for a vibrant National Machinery provided with the necessary human and financial resources. The continued existence of a weak National Machinery is not helpful to the gender cause in Zimbabwe in the long run.

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women: the way forward at national level

The fact that the Government of Zimbabwe has continued to provide for the existence of a National machinery to co-ordinate women's issues is very significant. That the government has gone further to promote gender

equality through the creation of the Gender Issues Department in the Office of the President further attests to that commitment.

The challenge, however, is to find ways of strengthening the National Machinery. There is a need for stakeholders, particularly women's groups and organisations, to own the National Machinery, define its mandate and its responsibilities and ensure that necessary actions are taken at government level to strengthen the National Machinery. The challenge to government is to ensure the adequate resourcing of the National Machinery.

The discussion above indicates that all is not well in the National Machinery on various fronts.

Zimbabwe has seen the development of potentially useful coalitions of women's groups and organisations. In the umbrella body of Non Governmental Organisations(NANGO) is a Women's Forum which has been working on various women's human rights issues. Yet another important development was the establishment of a Gender Forum, a brain child of the UN Gender group and co-ordinated by the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), to bring together groups working for the advancement of women. The significance of this platform is that it is set up to pull together efforts by the United Nations system, the donor community, government gender focal points, non-governmental organisations, and academic institutions focusing on gender issues. The hope is that this forum will work to create a conducive environment to develop gender-sensitive programmes that are in line with the implementation of recommendations from major United Nations organisations and other agencies.

The Gender Forum has already made a significant move by presenting women's contributions in the current constitutional review exercise by the Constitutional Commission of Zimbabwe. These efforts will ensure an engendered constitution for Zimbabwe.

2. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Women in Zimbabwe are still relatively invisible in key decision-making positions, be it in academic institutions, the judiciary, financial institutions, parastatal bodies and their governing bodies, and the private sector.

Apart from acceding to and being a signatory to several international conventions and agreements, in 1997 Zimbabwe, together with other Southern African Development Community countries, signed the Gender and Development Declaration in Blantyre, Malawi. In this declaration, SADC Heads of State and Government committed themselves to:

- ◆ Achieving at least a 30% target of women in political and decision-making structures by 2005;
- ◆ Promoting women's access to, and control over productive resources to reduce the level of poverty among women;
- ◆ Repealing and reforming all laws, amending constitutions and changing social practices which still subject women to discrimination;
- ◆ Taking urgent measures to prevent and deal with increasing levels of violence against women and children.

In working towards the objectives of the Platform for Action and the SADC Declaration calling for increased participation of women in power

and decision-making, the Zimbabwe Government in 1997 embarked on a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-funded project called Women in Politics and Decision-making.

The background to this project is that in its preparations for the Beijing Conference, the National Machinery set up a National Preparatory Committee to facilitate and co-ordinate the production of the Zimbabwe National Report for the Fourth World Conference. This National Preparatory Committee divided itself into thematic committees with one of them being "Participation in Decision-making". After the Beijing Conference, this subcommittee, which had a membership from the government, non-governmental sector, private sector and women parliamentarians, decided that the way forward in increasing women's participation in power and decision-making was to launch a national project to raise consciousness on the need for women to enter into the power and politics arena as well as to encourage women to vote for each other at elections.

The Women In Politics project was launched with its developmental objective being to enhance the position of women through their increased participation in politics and decision-making positions and processes at all levels of society, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Zimbabwean women constitute 52% of the national population, and yet are conspicuous by their inadequate representation at all levels of power and decision making.

The Women In Politics and Decision-making project

This project was started in May 1997. The expected outcomes of this project were:

- ⇒ to promote and establish a culture of recognition of women's abilities and talents;
- ⇒ to achieve 50% representation of women in decision-making, for example, in local council and other decision-making bodies by the year 2000;
- ⇒ to identify potential women candidates for decision-making positions and bodies;
- ⇒ to equip women for participation in politics and decision-making through civic education and skills training.

Because of the broad scope of the project, the project focus in implementation became Rural District Councils. The project was undertaken in the fifty-seven rural districts of Zimbabwe. The objective in the rural district councils was to mobilise women to stand for elections and then mobilise the constituents to vote for those women who stood for election.

At the project inception, there was only 2% female representation in rural district councils. In fact, this project was timely in that in 1998, a year from project start, there were rural district council elections.

Project Process and Activities

The project was evolved in a very participatory manner, borrowing and building on work already done on civic education and was ready to improve where necessary on work recognised to have been done. The driving ethos here was an appreciation of the need to sustain projects

that are important for the improvement of the status of women and the need to work together regardless of political differences.

This project drew on work already done in Zimbabwe. For some of the project design ideas, the Ministry of National Affairs used the findings of a study undertaken by the Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) on women in politics and decision-making. The project also recognised the experiences of other Southern African countries like the work of the NGO Women's Lobby in Zambia and the Women's Coalition in South Africa and the Ugandan experience that has seen a number of women ascend to influential positions of power.

The project was funded by the UNDP and also enjoyed the support of a number of donors who had given grants towards the efforts of a coalition of non-governmental organisations called the Church / NGO Civic Committee. Members of this civic education coalition are Zimrights, the Legal Resources Foundation, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, the Women's Action Group, Zimbabwe Christian Council of Churches, Edwin Spicer Productions and Africa Community Publishing.

The planned project activities were:

- seminars, workshops, radio and television programmes;
- use of written literature, mainly pamphlets;
- use of popular education methods;
- skills training for those women already in office;
- lobbying for law reform;
- research to give information on the extent and magnitude of women's exclusion from political and decision-making positions.

Although several project activities were planned for, the biggest effort went into conducting provincial and ward level workshops to get more women to run for rural district council elections and to get local constituencies to vote for women who stood for elections. Two levels of workshops were undertaken. At provincial level it was the training of trainers. The next level for training was the ward level. The ward training was meant to interest women in standing as candidates and to get the local constituents to vote for women candidates. In total, the project undertook 9 provincial training workshops and a total of 992 ward workshops. These workshops were attended as follows:

No. of workshops	Female participants	Male participants	Total no. of participants
1 001	18 234	12 474	30 708

Rural district council elections were held towards the end of 1998 and the following are the election results:

1998			
District	No. of councillors	No. of females	No. as % of total
Mashonaland East	201	4	2
Mashonaland West	201	4	2
Mashonaland Central	183	6	3.3

Masvingo	198	3	1.5
Matabeleland North	208	5	2.4
Matabeleland South	126	5	3.9
Midlands	236	9	3.8
Manicaland	201	6	2.9
TOTAL	1554	42	2.7

The last rural district council elections had been held in 1994. Of the total of 1554 seats contested, only 37 were occupied by women. The 1998 election results show a marginal increase of an additional 5 seats for women bringing them to 42 seats held by women in Rural District Councils.

Unfortunately, information on how many women had stood for elections in the first place is not readily available. There is need not only for information on the numbers of women who stood for elections but more studies need to be undertaken to understand why women do not stand, and if they do, why other women do not turn out in overwhelming numbers to vote for them.

It is important to note that civic education is a process and not an event. It is only through continued education that changes in perception and

attitudes can be achieved. The results of education are more in the long term than the immediate term and so the results of the Rural District Councils' elections may not necessarily be reflective of the learning process that took place as a result of this project. The ideal situation would be to continue to sustain the education programme for long term results. Due to financial constraints, there are no immediate plans to continue with community civic education along similar lines.

The National Machinery has since received funding from DFID (formally Overseas Development Agency) to run a joiner project called Gender Awareness which intends to equip locally elected leaders to involve women in development issues. The project also plans to help equip women already in power with skills and knowledge to identify and analyse women's issues. The project is still at planning stage and is expected to start soon. It will start in two districts targeting to work with some 2000 locally elected officials and some traditional leadership.

Audio and print programmes

As a part of the civic education project, some radio programmes in local languages were launched between 1997 and 1998. There were 13 radio programmes in all. Zimbabwe radio broadcasts have an estimated listenership of 2 million people on average. It is hoped that these programmes were informative.

There were 800 000 pamphlets distributed in this civic education campaign in seven local languages.

Power and Politics

Zimbabwe, like other countries, still struggles to develop indicators for measuring women's participation in politics and decision-making. Part of this struggle comes out of the reality that power points have not been defined as broadly as they should be, and so in considering power points people often look at the traditional positions of power in government and the non-governmental sector. In a bid to define power points, Zimbabwe plans to come up with a national baseline survey on power points.

Consultants have been identified to work on this project and have provided the Ministry with a synopsis of what the study will look at. Broadly, this survey is expected to come up with a Zimbabwean definition of power points, bringing out clearly an understanding of what constitutes power points, what the entry points to power points are and more importantly the gender dimensions and dynamics of power points.

Concepts of power, empowerment and power points will be looked at and defined. These terms are not necessarily commonly defined or understood by all the stakeholders.

The point of departure for the definition of power points is that these are decision making positions which make a difference. They are not limited to the political arena but cut across all sectors of development - economic, social, cultural, etc. Clearly influential posts in the financial sector, industry, academia, and research become in a sense political. The power points will be defined at different levels of society. This project is very important to Zimbabwe in that it is through its findings that

women's participation in power, politics and decision making can be effectively enhanced.

Unfortunately, financial constraints have been in the way of this project but the plans to see it through are still on board.

Women's Directory

The general argument on why women are not adequately represented in power and decision making positions is that there are just 'no' qualified women to take up these positions. In a bid to respond to this, the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives, building on other national efforts, intends to come up with a National Women's Directory. The Directory will put together names of qualified women in various sectors, and at all levels so as to create a resource base for recommending women for offices locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. This Directory will be updated periodically.

This project is going to be an improvement on the Ministry's previous attempt to come up with a women's directory. The first attempt had a limited geographical coverage whereas this project will be nation wide.

Women in Power and Decision-making: Recommendations for Action

Needless to say, Zimbabwe does recognise the need for gender equality in power and decision making positions. The continued efforts in civic education can only further the cause of gender equality in decision making. However, civic education which targets elections may not be a long-term solution to encouraging women's participation in power and

decision making. There is a need for Zimbabwe to introduce civic education in schools not so much as a tool for getting more people to vote but to inculcate in young people a firm grasp of their civic rights and responsibilities. There should be affirmation programmes for women to begin to believe in their own leadership abilities as part of civic education material. Civic education should not be in once-off workshops but should be incorporated into continuous learning opportunities and programmes.

The Zimbabwean media, both print and electronic, should be lobbied to include civic education in their social responsibility programmes and build in positive images of women in power and decision making positions in their broadest expression.

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN

Formal Education

Gender disparities exist in Zimbabwean schools with regard to access to schooling, retention and achievement (both cognitive and attitudinal)

While figures for 1990 - 1994 showed that the percentage of primary school girls out of the total enrolment starting from the first grade were consistently lower than boys, averaging about 48%, the 1995 to 1999 figures show that Zimbabwe has now almost achieved parity at primary school level. Even then, considering that 52% of the Zimbabwean population is female, there is still an under-representation of girl children.

In early childhood education, Zimbabwe now registers a high number of girl children entering early childhood education centres.

It is important to note that Zimbabwe still has another challenge to contend with in education which is based on the rural versus the urban dichotomy. While urban girls have improved access to primary school, the same is not true of rural girls. On average there has been a 49% representation of girl children in rural primary schools compared to the average of 50% in urban primary schools in the years under review.

While there has been an improvement in retention rates in primary schools, there are glaring gender disparities in secondary to tertiary education.

1994

Level	Percentage of females enrolled
Primary	50.2%
Lower Secondary (1-4 yrs senior school)	40.0%
Upper Secondary (5-6 yrs senior school)	29.0%
Technical and Vocational	34.0%
University	26.0%

Notwithstanding these gender disparities, Zimbabwe has improved in terms of retention figures for girls at all levels of the education system as a result of affirmative action programmes put in place, particularly at tertiary education level.

1996

Level	Percentage of females enrolled
Primary	49
Lower Secondary (1-4 yrs senior school)	46.8
Upper Secondary (5-6 yrs senior school)	38
Technical and Vocational	41.3
University	29.2

There are gender differences in cognitive achievement in Zimbabwe. These differences are quite small at primary school level but tend to widen and be more subject dependent as one goes up the education system at least up to 4 years of secondary education. Beyond 4 years of secondary education, the differences are more to do with achievement in various subjects than with the pass rate, with girls achieving better in languages and boys having better results in Mathematics and Sciences.

There are also gender differences in attitudinal achievement. In a survey by Gordon (1995), it was suggested that girls are seriously disadvantaged attitudinally compared to boys. This has serious implications for girls since it creates a vicious cycle in which the negative attitudes affect their cognitive achievements which in turn negatively affects their self-esteem and career aspirations.

Gender Equity in Education

The Government of Zimbabwe has in place a policy of equity in education. To effect the provisions of this policy, the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, with the technical and funding support of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) respectively, has put in place a Gender in Education Project. This is a five year programme running from 1995-2000. The long term goal of this project is to create an enabling environment for the girl child's equitable access to participation and achievement in education.

This project employs a multi-faceted, multi-targeted approach which focuses on changing the attitudes, values and perceptions of a variety of stakeholders who play a role in the girl child's education.

The project employs the following strategies:

- empowerment of stakeholders, namely school children (particularly the girls) and communities, so that they can participate fully in matters which influence their own lives and the lives of their children respectively;
- capacity building, largely focusing on the development of a variety of skills among educational personnel and parents and the creation of structures and conditions where such skills can be effectively applied, and
- advocacy aimed at influencing positive change among the leadership, such as law makers, (e.g. parliamentarians), policy makers, policy/programme implementers, community leaders and opinion makers

Achievements of the Gender Equity in Education Project

At the policy making level, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture has been running nation-wide gender sensitisation workshops for senior officials in the Ministry since 1996. The idea behind the workshops has been to sensitise these policy makers such that policy enunciation would affect curriculum development, school discipline, school structures and services, teaching practices and other school-related activities such as sports and games. An example to demonstrate the effectiveness of these gender sensitisation workshops is that traditionally in some sporting activities in schools, there was a differentiation in prizes between boys and girls. There is now a policy in place that has outlawed that practice and provided for equal treatment of learners even in the allocation of rewards for good performance.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture head office's data system and research capacity is being strengthened so that senior government officials and policy makers are provided with timely and relevant information to review policy and develop strategies for increased gender equity in the school system. So far, several baseline studies and other research studies have been supported through this project. Examples of research undertaken are on teenage pregnancy and academic advancement for the girl child, evaluation of teaching methodologies, etc. There is now in place a basic Fact-sheet on Education produced each year and a tracking system has been developed to monitor the achievement of girls and boys in the different subjects at the various levels in their education both at primary and secondary school level.

At the school level, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture has embarked on an exercise to review all curricula and ensure that pedagogical practices are gender sensitive. To this end, resource books, manuals and other materials have been or are being developed to help school heads and teachers recognise and effectively deal with gender insensitivity.

Ongoing too is a screening of curricula, all teaching materials and teaching aids already in use for gender biases and stereotypes. The aim of this exercise is to help adopt and support gender-sensitive pedagogical practices in the classroom.

A number of manuals have been developed for different target groups. One of these materials is one called "Gender Sensitivity - Handbook for School Heads", which clearly lays out what gender issues are, gender problems in education in Zimbabwe, factors that affect girls' participation in education. The manual then lays out what school heads and other leaders can do to correct the situation. This manual has been distributed to schools throughout the country.

Other manuals developed include one for women in management which targets gender education to potential and practising managers in the education system. The other is called Gender and Education.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture has also introduced human rights education through some subjects. The need to introduce human rights education was established through a Commonwealth funded study which showed low levels of human rights literacy in secondary schools. This study was conducted in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Northern Ireland.

At the community level, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture seeks to develop the capacities of parent-teacher associations and bodies in order to help them to plan, implement, manage and monitor those activities which improve the school environment for all children, with a deliberate emphasis on the provision of adequate school and community level support systems for the education of girls. This is being achieved through capacity building through education and training where gender sensitivity is the key component. Due to limited resources, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture cannot reach every family, but it is hoped that those parent leaders in the parent school associations can encourage and influence other parents to develop and nurture home environments which are supportive of the girl child. A facilitator's guide for the sensitisation of parents/schools associations has been developed and is being used to guide the participatory training.

In targeting the general public, the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture has developed a film called 'Mwanasikana' (Girl child) which projects a positive image of the girl and her right to equal treatment and education. There are plans to develop a similar film for a different cultural settings in Zimbabwe. The film 'Mwanasikana' has been screened on the National television station of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. The film has also been extensively used as a discussion prompter in gender sensitisation of various stakeholders including the Parents/Schools Associations. The Ministry of Information, Post and Telecommunications' Mobile film unit has been screening the film in rural areas throughout Zimbabwe.

The print media is continuously making its contribution to the gender discussion through printing positive stories on girl children and how parents can help.

The ultimate focus of this project is on the school children themselves. Traditional and innovative interventions are used in an effort to expose children to learning materials which will change their minds and attitudes to education, their achievement levels, aspirations and ultimately their opportunities. One of these interventions has been in holiday coaching programmes for girls in Mathematics and Science where girls are grossly underrepresented and their interest and achievement levels are low. It is hoped that through these effort, girls' confidence will be boosted and subsequently their performance.

Other interventions to help the girl child have been through direct financial support to girl children where these would otherwise drop out. This financial support programme is implemented through two non-governmental organisations, namely, CAMFED and SHAMWARI DZEVANA VEZIMBAWE (Friends of the Children of Zimbabwe). Zimbabwe has been badly hit by the AIDS pandemic which has left some families either financially impoverished due to the high cost of looking after people suffering from AIDS, or left children orphaned and without any means of financial sustenance.

Yet another area of support for girl children has been a community-initiated programme through non-governmental organisations and civic groups that have come up with girl mentor sub-projects through which needy girls in secondary schools are supported by local communities.

The girl mentors are expected to provide social, moral and educational support to younger primary school girls in their communities.

Tertiary Education

In tertiary education, some institutions like the University of Zimbabwe have put in place an affirmative action programme. This affirmative action programme which guaranteed a 30% quota for women for all first year intakes was introduced in 1996. There was a general public outcry against this move but it has reaped rewards for the improved representation of women at the University of Zimbabwe and other tertiary institutions.

The University of Zimbabwe has seen a 10% increase of women in first year enrolments as a result of this affirmative action programme.

A lot of work still needs to be done in getting equitable gender representation in the education system. Zimbabwe believes that changing gender representation to achieve equity cannot happen overnight but is a process. Zimbabwe also believes that once a positive environment is achieved at home, in the community in early childhood education, at primary and secondary level, it should be easier to deal with tertiary education. Girls who were not present in the education system at lower levels cannot suddenly appear for inclusion in tertiary education.

Education and Training of women: strategic actions to be taken

Clearly, there have been major developments in addressing the critical area of concern on Education and Training of Women in Zimbabwe. The

bottom line, though, is that there is still a lot of work begging for attention. The policy framework to facilitate the attainment of gender equality is in place and so is the political will and commitment.

What needs to happen, though, at national level is to continually create partnerships of all stakeholders in the education system for a holistic approach to dealing with gender inequalities in education. There are great numbers of critical stakeholders in the education system all of whom are important and play a crucial role. Zimbabwe therefore needs to continue to work at coming up with creative ways of capturing the interest, attention and commitment of these stakeholders.

Much as there is a recognised importance on how self image and attitude affect performance, not much attention is so far being given to that in the education system now. The main factor preventing girls from realising their full potential in cognitive development appears to be an environment that fosters and promotes self-defeating, negative self images among Zimbabwean girls. Unfortunately this creates a vicious cycle in which these negative attitudes lead to poorer achievement which in turn reinforces the negative attitudes. A vicious cycle indeed. There is an understandable preoccupation with cognitive development at the exclusion of attitudinal aspects of education. The challenge is to try and balance the cognitive with the attitudinal aspects otherwise the struggle for gender equality becomes endless.

Given that the Government of Zimbabwe's financial resources cannot meet the challenges of dealing with gender inequalities in school, this has meant that the education sector relies heavily on donor funding for its programme work. This reliance on external funding, if not properly

managed, could result in fragmented and ineffective implementation strategies. There is a need for the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture to come up with a holistic strategic programme of implementation of its gender equity programme which can then be used to solicit funding and to guide the funding programme without detracting from the articulated global strategy of the education and training sector.

4. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

The Government of Zimbabwe is committed to the inclusion of women in the mainstream economy through their economic empowerment. To facilitate this commitment, a Department of Employment Creation was set up in the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives to be the lead employment creation agent. The two main target groups for the programmes and projects of this Department are women and the youth.

Given this background, the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives has made great strides in coming up with innovative projects to help communities, particularly women and the youth, create wealth.

The Oma Bank

In 1980, the idea of setting up a women's bank was mooted. The National Machinery at the time felt that in order to empower women economically, there was a need to establish a Women's bank which would address the economic plight of women through providing them

with affordable money at concessionary interest rates. This idea was reinforced by an International Conference on Employment Promotion hosted by Zimbabwe in 1993. The Conference, which drew international and local experts on employment promotion, recommended the establishment of a Women's Bank if the government of Zimbabwe was to empower women economically.

In 1994, processes were set in motion in preparation for the establishment of the Bank in the form of the OMA Bank Capital Account Project. This was an initiative of a federation of 14 Women's Business groups for the women of Zimbabwe working with the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives. The aims of the Bank included:

- ◊ bringing banking to the marginalised rural and urban people operating below the poverty datum line in Zimbabwe, with particular emphasis on women
- ◊ providing the women of Zimbabwe with the opportunity of being champions of their own destiny by making it possible for them to own a majority stake in the Bank
- ◊ availing credit finance, not only to facilitate production and the creation of new wealth by lubricating trade and commerce, but also as a means of economic and social empowerment, particularly for the women of Zimbabwe; and
- ◊ creating a banking infrastructure that would broaden the economic base through the provision of innovative financial products targeted at the marginalised groups in Zimbabwe

The bank project unfortunately is yet to fully take off for a number of reasons. Its setting up lacked expert technical support in order to give it

impetus. The bank project was unable to secure financial support for its administrative work in preparation for its operation. This resulted in a lack of leadership such that there were insufficient efforts to mobilise the membership to pay up their share holder subscriptions. These subscriptions would have provided the capital base for the then Z\$50 million surety required by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe in order to register a commercial bank.

In order to become shareholder of OMA Bank, participants were required to contribute a minimum of \$70.00 per month for a period of 12 months. This small amount set for the purchase of shares has made it difficult for the accumulation of the surety required for bank registration. The other alternative would have been to set a higher share price which would have excluded many women from participating in the bank project. In order to reach the minimum surety amount required, the bank requires a big number of shareholders. This in turn requires a massive membership drive.

The other challenge the Bank is currently facing is that, due to the collapse of some banks in Zimbabwe, the Central Bank has tightened its rules for registering banks, including raising the minimum surety from Z\$50 million to Z\$100 million.

Because the OMA Bank Capital Account Project has taken time to take off, some members of the confederation of business women responsible for setting up the Bank have pulled out either because of fatigue or conflicting interests. The National Machinery has now assumed a leadership role, working with the remaining business women to get the Bank going.

With a persistent membership drive and a reasonable accumulation of share capital, it would be possible to negotiate with the Reserve Bank to waive its conditions around the surety amount required.

Opening of soft windows for women and the youth in financial institutions

Another attempt by the Department of Employment Creation to address the problem of women's access to the economy was through asking the Minister of Finance to use the Banking Act to facilitate women's access to the economy through the opening of soft windows by financial institutions.

Under this project, the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives asked the Ministry of Finance to mobilise support for the funding of model projects from financial institutions. The proposal was that financial institutions be asked by the Ministry of Finance to allocate a specified percentage of their funds to finance these soft windows. In considering projects for funding, the financial institutions would use the criterion of project viability as security as opposed to collateral security.

In the same proposal, it was requested that the Minister of Finance also explore the possibility of funding the model projects for women and the youth under the Poverty Alleviation Action Plan of the Government's Social Dimensions Fund.

The Poverty Alleviation Action Plan has women and the youth as its target for support in order to empower them to create self-employment through engaging in income-generating projects.

In mobilising this project, the Department of Employment Creation hoped to start off as a pilot project taking a project from each ward, district and province.

This project clearly specified the features of what it considered model projects for consideration. At ward level the project would have the following characteristics:

- 75% of the group membership would be women with some of these women in decision making positions in the project
- the project had to be economically feasible, financially viable and socially desirable
- the project had to have the potential to grow both in membership and in production
- the project had to be mechanised in the medium and long term

There is a visible deviation in the specification of group membership at district level. The following are the characteristics of the District level project:

- * 75% of the group membership to be youth
- * to be economically feasible, financially viable and socially desirable
- * the project had to have the potential to grow both in membership and in production, and be bigger than the ward project

As the projects grow bigger from ward to district, to province, the requirement for the projects to have a large female representation in membership and decision making diminish.

While the ideas in this project proposal are good, the project has not gone beyond the proposal stage. One of the reasons given for the failure to implement is that the Ministry of Finance is still bound by outdated legislation which prohibits the Minister from effecting the Banking Act to get financial institutions to create these soft windows for small and medium scale enterprises.

Women's Fund

Before and after the Beijing Conference, there was a call for the indigenisation of the economy. Zimbabwe saw a rise in the number of organisations set up to lobby government to create opportunities for indigenous Zimbabweans to enter the mainstream economy. As a result of one such initiative by the Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC), the Central Bank created a Z\$400 million facility for lending to small and medium scale enterprises through the Credit Guarantee Company of Zimbabwe. A further Z\$100 million was made available at a later stage.

What became clear in the course of time was that though this fund was available for both women and men, women were not accessing the fund on an equal basis. There were general complaints against this fund, that because of negative attitudes towards the thrust of the indigenisation programme, commercial banks, through which the funds were channelled, tended to delay the disbursement of the funds or the approval of projects.

The banks required proof of academic or technical qualifications from borrowers. This made it difficult for those who needed the money and

particularly for some women and the youth. There was also a reluctance to give money to new and upcoming business people, who tended to be women, as banks viewed new business as risky.

Realising these problems, the Department of Employment Creation then requested that some seed money of Z\$5 million be set aside specifically for women's projects from this Fund. The Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives was asked to draw up a constitution which would guide the disbursement of this loan facility.

This was done but the record is that women ended up not benefiting fully from this facility.

Institutionalisation of flea markets

The Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives, realising that informal trading and corner shops were reservoirs for women and a source of livelihood for many of them, made an application to the Ministry in charge of local government for the legalisation of flea markets. This request was strongly opposed by big time traders who feared competition for their businesses.

When it became clear that Local Authorities were under pressure not to legalise flea markets because of their own vested interest in big time trading through the collection of rates and other services, the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives appealed to Cabinet to compel the local Authorities to comply with this request.

Zimbabwe has now legalised flea markets as well as corner shops. This move has apparently benefited women and the youth.

Related to this is the provision of work shelters for informal traders in crafts, fruits and vegetables. The Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives asked the local authorities to provide, within their budgets, for work shelters for informal traders, including increasing and improving provision for public ablutions and water points at trading points.

This was granted and Zimbabwe has seen the rise of work shelters which have improved the work environment of informal traders through the provision of shaded trading areas.

Associations for small and medium-scale enterprises

In the years under review, the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives has successfully lobbied that small to medium size enterprises form their umbrella associations. The Ministry has specified the need for female representation in these associations. The benefit of these associations is that they provide small to medium size enterprises and other informal traders with vehicles for collective action including lobbying and campaigning for suitable business environments. The Ministry has gone further to facilitate training in lobbying and advocacy skills for association members.

Women and the Economy : The way forward at national level

The Government of Zimbabwe has made great strides in working towards dismantling gender and other inequalities in the economy. What remains to be done is to put in place a policy addressing issues of women and the economy. Since its inception, the Department of Employment Creation has not had a policy framework in place but derived its mandate from official pronouncements. The Department is now finalising a policy document that will institutionalise gender equality and ensure that women are not marginalised in programmes and projects meant to benefit them. Given the plethora of projects planned and already undertaken to get women into the mainstream of the economy, the policy framework will need to provide for a gender audit of all projects already in place and ensure the gender sensitivity of new ones.

Given Zimbabwe's historical background, economic marginalisation challenges both indigenous men and women with an overrepresentation of women in poverty. Under these circumstances, a clear gendered policy framework is mandatory otherwise women will lose out or be left behind:

Another area that needs to be looked at in relation to women and the economy are studies which will show what the impact of micro-finance has been on women's economic status. Such studies will ensure that whatever projects are embarked on truly address women's economic needs and fully involve them in the mainstream of the economy:

There is a need to revisit women's participation in the informal sector, ensuring their visibility in the economy. Because of the difficult economic conditions that Zimbabwe finds herself in, there has been an emergence of a strong informal sector. The majority of women in the country are in the informal sector.

IV. CONCLUSION

Zimbabwe has made progress in promoting gender equality through the implementation of the Platform for Action but these efforts have been uneven, fragmented and poorly co-ordinated.

In order to maintain and escalate the pace of development, there is a need for a well co-ordinated and holistic approach at a national level . The way to achieve that is through a vibrant, commonly owned and well resourced National Machinery.